Inflight (Flight Attendant) Irregularity Reports

Incident Info
Event Date- 07/13/09
Approximate Time of Event (Central Time) - 1645

Flight Info
Flight Number- 2294
Departure City- BNA
Arrival City- BWI
Diversion City- CRW
Aircraft Number- N387SW
Mission- Passenger

Submitter Info
Duties During Event- A Flight Attendant

At approximately 16:45 CST, flight 2294 (passengers and crew) heard a loud "pop," followed by a "wooshing" of air! I quickly realized the cabin's air had rapidly decompressed when I began to feel lightheaded and the oxygen units deployed from the PSUs! I took air from the nearest mask and began to walk from row to row, mask to mask checking on passengers and assisting with oxygen mask usage! "B" and "C" were also checking on passengers, who were frantic at first, complaining of pain in their ears, neck and chest. One began to hyperventilate and threw up several times. The Captain called during this time and received confirmation from the "B," that there had, in fact, been a decompression and damage to aircraft. I learned later that the initial damage was visible in the roof paneling only, and opened into a hole to the outside during rapid decent.

After I checked all of the passengers, I got onto the PA to remind passengers to stay calm, pull down on their masks to activate their oxygen flow, to breath normally, that their bags may not inflate, and that there was absolutely no smoking allowed. Next I worked back through the cabin checking on passengers, again, paying special attention to those unable to breathe normally due to fright. Sometime during this I spoke with the Captain who informed us we were descending as quickly as possible and that we would be diverting immediately. I told him the crew and passengers all seemed to be okay, at least physically. He then asked the Flight Attendants to take our seats for our safety during decent, which was difficult to do as the passengers needed and called to us constantly.

I don't remember if it was in this conversation or the next, but the Captain and I next discussed the TNT. He told us that we had approximately 10 minutes to landing, he notified the passengers, and told us we would need to prepare the cabin for an emergency landing and a possible evacuation. At that time I called "B" to the front, where "C" and I had begun synchronizing our watches. It was 4:55 CST. We removed the Planned Emergency Checklist and went through as much as we could (including the ABA briefing) before running out of time. Although we did end up with an extra 5-10 minutes, I was unable to do a final walkthrough, having time only to secure the galley.

Upon landing, the Captain immediately got on the PA and told us to remain seated. We arrived at the gate and asked the passengers to stay seated while we were met with emergency ground personnel, who began surveying both the passengers and the damage to the aircraft. Once it was safe to do so, we had the passengers deplane (with their belongings) and head to a sterile area of the terminal.

We waited for several hours for an aircraft to replace ours and take our passengers onto BWI. During this time our crew worked hard to both stay together and care for our frazzled passengers. We decided to take beverages, snacks and supplies off the aircraft to serve them, and decided later to organize a "pizza buffet" to keep them comfortable. This was at our own Captain's expense.

Shortly after this, the new aircraft arrived and BWI based employees (ground and inflight) took charge of the passengers and began boarding the flight to BWI. Our crew changed into less conspicuous clothing

and left the airport for the hotel, where the NTSB drug tester was waiting for us. We had food delivered, had a quick crew debriefing, and went our separate ways.

I would like to note that the communication of ALL Southwest and CRW employees during this incident was phenomenal. This included the crew, passengers, Crew Scheduling, CRW Station employees, CRW Emergency Ground Personnel, BWI Inflight Supervisors, Headquarters, Executives, and CISM. The incident TRULY evolved like a textbook case. I felt well prepared to handle the situation, and felt it was handled extremely well by all involved!

Submitter Info

Duties During Event- B Flight Attendant

I was B flying. As I was standing in the back galley solo about to take out my tray of drinks I heard a very loud pop/explosion. Immediately following the loud noise I felt a jolt and the plane began to rapidly descend. What seemed like right after the jolt the masks fell and I went to the back row of seats to look into cabin. I saw that all of the pax masks were also down; as well as I spotted what was initially a dent in the ceiling: capt side about row 20-21.

I grabbed my mask first to take oxygen for approximately 10-15 seconds and proceeded out into the cabin to check on the pax. I went mask to mask; row to row from the back making my way up to the fwd galley. As a whole the pax were surprisingly calm and everyone had taken a mask. There were a few people who had trouble getting enough oxygen and began complaining of earaches and/or numbness in their hands. I proceeded to make my way through the cabin assisting pax and doing my best to calm their nerves.

As I was approaching the fwd galley the capt was calling and I answered up front. This was the first contact with the cockpit that I was personally aware of. I informed him that we were all ok for the time being. He asked what was happening and I told him that the last I saw there was a tear in the ceiling; and we were able to see partially the wires etc. At that time he said we would be descending and fa's should take our seats. This was the last contact I personally had with the flight deck.

At this time we had been descending for aprox. 15 min. I once again made my way to the back galley while checking on pax in the meanwhile; who were generally calm with the exception of one or two crying/ hysterical pax. There were also two DH pilots who made sure we told the capt that at this point the dent had turned into a 1ft by 1ft hole in the ceiling; which I later found out was communicated to the capt by the A.

"A" then called me to the front to prepare for an emergency landing and possible evacuation. We went through the entire procedure TNT. And proceeded to demonstrate the brace positions as well as briefed my ABAs for the possible evacuation. All FAs then took our seats and we landed in West VA. The landing was smooth and when we came to a stop the CAPT said to remain seated. In the jetbridge before we joined the pax the CAPT briefly talked to the 3 fas letting us know that we were not to talk about specifics to anyone.

At the gate the pax and crew were led into a sterile area where we remained for several hours until the flight that was ferried from BWI arrived to transport them back to BWI. During our time on the ground all five of the crew members stayed together with a united front and catered to the pax as much as possible with snacks/drinks/pizza. I was only aware of one or two people who were considering not getting back on the flight- but had no confirmation of that. The overall vibe was gratitude for the calm response of the entire crew.

After the pax were on their way to BWI; the 5 of us went to the hotel where we were drug tested and had time to talk with each other. Overall this was a very traumatic experience; but I felt well prepared to handle what needed to be done and was very confident in the ability of every single one of the crew members that I was working with. In addition I was very encouraged by the response of everyone in the

SWA family from ops agents to supervisors/managers. I felt the situation was textbook decompression and we all responded with textbook procedure.

Submitter Info
Duties During Event- C Flight Attendant

Approx. 16:45 during in-flight beverage service SWA 2294 experienced rapid aircraft decompression. I was working the “C” position and was walking forward with a tray of drinks when I heard loud bang. I looked back towards the sound to see what had happened and to get a visual on the “B” flight attendant and then to the front to check for the “A” flight attendant, when the overhead oxygen was activated. I proceeded to the forward galley and set down my tray of drinks; at which time “A” and I put on our mask and began to assess the situation. “A” was assisting a passenger on the front row who became physically ill and I went mask to mask assisting other passengers that seemed in distress, “B” did the same from the back. “A” did so as well. At approx. 16:55 “A” coordinated info with the flight deck, “B” came up from the back, and we prepared the cabin for a planned emergency landing. “A” made the initial announcement, and we all briefed the ABA's in our respective sections; and they cleared they're galleys. We all tried to be as calm and reassuring as we could. The Capt. & F.O. got us down as quickly, and safely, as possible; and kept us informed as best they could.

Once we reached a breathable altitude most of the passengers calmed down pretty quickly, although nerves were still running pretty high. We all continued to reassure the passengers that everything was OK, I told a few that "Amazing Grace" was the unofficial SWA happy song of the day and to sing it out loud if they wanted. We all stayed up as long as we could while trying to take care of our passengers. As we landed in CRW, Charleston, West Virginia, to the applause of many, we realized that an evacuation seemed no longer imminent. Upon reaching the gate the Capt. announced our safe arrival and we prepared the doors for arrival. We asked everyone to remain seated and await further instructions. Once the forward entry door was opened fire and medical personnel came on board; when a holding area had been established the passengers began to deplane; I was given charge of the UM and stood in the forward galley asking after the well-being of the passengers as they got off; particularly those that were having the most difficulty during the event. I called my wife and my sister to let them know that I was OK.

We got off the plane and were asked to stay together; one of the passengers if memory serves was next to the UM on the plane, and she helped us to keep an eye on him. We gathered in one of the gate areas and disseminated the pertinent info to the passengers as we received it. I reminded “B” to call home, but her phone was dead, luckily my charger fit so she could retrieve her numbers and make her calls. Snacks and beverages were pulled from the plane and the Capt. purchased pizzas for everyone a bit later. The food came just as the other plane arrived and was distributed in a quick and orderly fashion. As they began to re-board the new aircraft we straightened the gate areas as best we could. We changed out of our uniforms to appear less conspicuous upon leaving the airport.

We checked in at the hotel, ordered our meals, and went to meet the testing requirements. We ate and decompressed for a while and went down to the business center to work on our IR's. The hotel staff was most accommodating and helpful. Our staff and leadership as well, have been great and have showed the utmost care and concern for our safety and well being, and for that I am grateful.

I remember “B” saying that it appeared to happen in two stages, that the hole didn't appear all at once. I also remember on a trip week or so ago that a passenger stopped the A on the way back from her final walk through saying that she heard what she thought was an unusual noise coming from overhead bin area; that's all I remember about it, and I'm sure why I remembered this at all.